

A TENTATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF RECENT STRIKES

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The year 1996 witnessed around ten strikes by workers of foreign - invested companies. It's worth noting that 45.4% of these strikes took place in factories invested by South Korean legal entities. In some inquiries into reasons why these strikes grew more frequent and serious, labor authorities learned that it's employers' violation of the Labor Code that forced workers to go out on strike. In some foreign-invested factories, the regulation on 8-hour workday was realized by slowing the clock, or in other words, this prolongation of the working hours is a way to provide workers with a chance to contribute more to the development of the factory, as Marx put it.

Another noteworthy fact is that wages paid to workers of foreign invested factories weren't high enough for them to reproduce their strength. In May 1992, the Ministry of Labor, War Invalid and Social Affairs issued the Decision 242 reducing the basic wage rate paid to workers of foreign invested factories from US\$50 to 35 per month (in cities of the first grade). Lately, the workers' demand and public opinion have forced the said Ministry to raise this rate to US\$45 per month by its Decision 385. However, many experts thought that this measure was only a way to supply air to workers' lung by a breathing-aid, instead of letting them breathe freely.

One cause that we have to mention here is the rude, even brutal, behavior of some foreign managers towards Vietnamese workers. Many factories with Taiwanese and South Korean managers have witnessed a lot of scenes in which the human dignity of Vietnamese workers was trampled on and it seems that punishments put on these brutes up

to now aren't severe enough for them to learn their lesson. Moreover, in many cases, some foreign managers have acted as if they were above the law. These facts puts to authorities a lot of questions: Why does this situation become so serious? What must we do to prevent such a brutal behavior towards Vietnamese workers in this year, 1997, and the next years?

In the VCP 8th National Congress in Hà Nội in June 1996, the political report affirmed that the state capitalist sector is the cooperation between the public sector and foreign capitalists aiming at mutual benefit. Thus, joint venture concerns belong to the state capitalist sector in which foreign capitalists didn't invest their money in Vietnam for nothing but they have earned daily profit from Vietnam market. This fact provides us with a base for rejecting the illusion that foreign investors give more and take less, or Vietnam parties have nothing to lose in doing business with foreign partners.

Then in a joint venture where both parties have equal rights and duties, why now and then did foreign partners treat Vietnamese workers so badly? The answer is simple but bitter: Vietnam has its own law system dealing with labor affairs but the law wasn't enforced properly, and it's Vietnamese parties in the joint venture that have to bear full responsibility for this.

As we know, the human factor is both the cause and consequence of all social problems. I don't want to analyze here the important role of this factor. I want only to repeat one of teachings of Hồ Chí Minh: to build socialism, there must be socialists. At present, our society is in the transition to the socialism and in this transition, the state

capitalist sector has come into being. This sector is described by Lenin as a "waiting room" for the socialism. However, this waiting room also has its own duality and Lenin also said that if there was no full control of a proletarian government, no good and competent managers, the proletarian government will not be able to prevent negative effects of the capitalism. In our market economy today, these effects have also made their appearance.

The fact that many Vietnamese officials, including the leadership of the trade union, working in joint ventures failed to perform their duties, has become a knotty problem. In many joint ventures, Vietnamese officials have taken a back seat willingly or unwillingly. Some of them even tried to suppress the struggle of trade unions. In this matter, I think that we have to pay attention to the following factors when estimating Vietnamese officials working in joint ventures the business performance of joint venture, income of Vietnamese officials, and number of times these officials travel abroad.

In reality, we have witnessed many factories suffering losses but the income of Vietnamese officials remained at the mark of some thousand dollars per month, and they have got a lot of chances to go abroad "on business". What can we call this phenomenon? It's nothing but the corruption and irresponsibility of these officials. This is also a reason why Vietnamese workers had to go out on strike because they get no help from Vietnamese officials working as partners in joint ventures.

Strike, which originated from inequality, has become workers' voice of dissent demanding for justice and respect for human dignity.